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In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

MAY 17, 1998

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Editorial

The Rarest of Candidates

Politicians have always been creatures of their constituents. Before the advent in the '60s of television, consultants and polling, candidates were chosen and elected by party organizations made up, in many places, of active citizens. Especially in legislative districts, candidates and officeholders were responsible to the party members who nurtured their careers and then got them elected. Even then, of course, many politicians were beholden to the monied interests that financed their campaigns or provided other gifts. Yet popular support from people working together to elect candidates played a substantial role, particularly in races for state legislatures and the House of Representatives.

That was then. Now, politicians rely more and more on the media to introduce them to voters, and political parties count for less and less. As candidates increasingly rely on television, the electoral process has become primarily an exercise in fundraising. Party labels still have some meaning, but parties rarely function as groups of organized citizens. Deprived of their traditional role, parties and their partisans have become things to be manipulated. The true parties are now organized accumulations of money. And the real constituents are those who provide it.

Consequently, the race to raise money and then spend it on name recognition is increasingly important for ambitious politicians who lack natural constituencies. Those who raise money early, and spend it to advantage, can then attract more money from donors looking to gain influence with a winner.

Bill Clinton understood this when he was still governor of Arkansas. That's why, in 1991, he moved early to win the two most important primaries—the money primary and the media primary. By raising millions while other candidates were getting geared up, the corporate media anointed him the

frontrunner. That, along with clever consultants, won him the nomination. Close attention to polling data and the fact that he was not George Bush then won him the election. In 1995, more than a year before his first term expired, he did it again, mounting the earliest and most intensive television campaign ever waged by a sitting president.

Clinton has become a model of the corruption of our political process. Already, dozens of senatorial, congressional and gubernatorial candidates are putting millions of dollars into 1998 campaigns, which

will break all spending records. Rare, indeed, is the candidate who is close enough to voters to make this obscenity unnecessary.

There have, of course, been a few such rarities. Running in the 1984 and 1988 Democratic primaries, the Rev. Jesse Jackson had—and needed—very little money. In 1988, he got 7 million votes in the primaries. He could do this because he was a long-time leader of a broad community, and could count on heavy support from the most important remaining ethnic voting block.

Similarly, Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-Minn.) has been elected and re-elected to the Senate while being heavily outspent by his opponents because he has deep roots in the civic life of his state and a grass-roots campaign organization behind him.

Wellstone is testing the waters for a run at the Democratic nomination for President in 2000. He has established an exploratory committee, and he has built up a national base of support as a principled, progressive leader. It's unlikely that he could win the nomination, and even more unlikely that he could get elected—though stranger things have happened. But if he runs in the primaries we will at least have a real debate about our national priorities. And who knows what that might stir up?—J.W.

**Already,
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Letters

Bad Planning

I enjoyed your recent cover story on India ("India's Identity Crisis," April 19). However, I was concerned about the use of certain numbers in the story. Ethirajan Anbarasan quotes figures from India's Planning Commission to show that there has been a decline in poverty in India, from 36 percent in 1994 to 29.2 percent in 1997, since the onset of economic liberalization. This is debatable at best.

The Planning Commission is a government body that is notorious for its manipulation of statistics. Most independent estimates (including United Nations Development Programme statistics) show that the Indian poverty rate increased in the immediate aftermath of the market reforms. The Expert Group on Estimation of Proportion and Number of Poor, a quasi-governmental group that is far more independent-minded than the Planning Commission, estimates a poverty rate of 39.6 percent in fiscal year 1994-95. That is up from 35.6 percent in 1990-91, the year the reform process began.

Also, a study by Preveen Jha in the May 17-24, 1997, issue of *Economic and Political Weekly* shows that the real wages for agricultural laborers were lower in fiscal year 1995-96 than in 1990-91. It would be hard to find a more economically deprived group in India than agricultural laborers. If the results are reliable, it calls the entire economic transition into question.

The jury is still out on the long-term effects of the economic liberalization process. However, in the first few years, it has been the poor who have borne the brunt of the adjustment.

Amit Pal
Madison, Wis.

A President Scorned

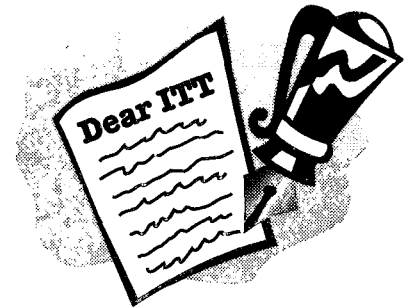
There is no anger like the anger of someone deceived. All these years, I allowed your publication into my home, thinking that you were delivering some kind of objective view of world affairs. It turns out that you are, in fact, part of the "vast right-wing conspiracy" that Hillary Clinton has identified. Words cannot express my profound disappointment.

I am fed up with all this hashing and rehashing of unsubstantiated allegations against the president ("The Personal is Political," April 19). Why you have chosen to buy into this well-funded and highly coordinated campaign is beyond me. I think it's all a futile effort to say that Clinton is no better than the late Dick Nixon. Well, he is better. I would rather have a president who has dallied with a dozen or so women than one who screwed the whole nation.

Of all the deeds Bill Clinton has ever done in his career, the greatest of them all was when he dodged the Vietnam War. If guys like him hadn't taken a position against that vile exercise, our military would still be over there—or over somewhere—killing and maiming. Your hypocrisy is astounding.

Cancel my subscription now and send my refund to Clinton's legal defense fund.

N.J. Jensen
Mountain View, Calif.



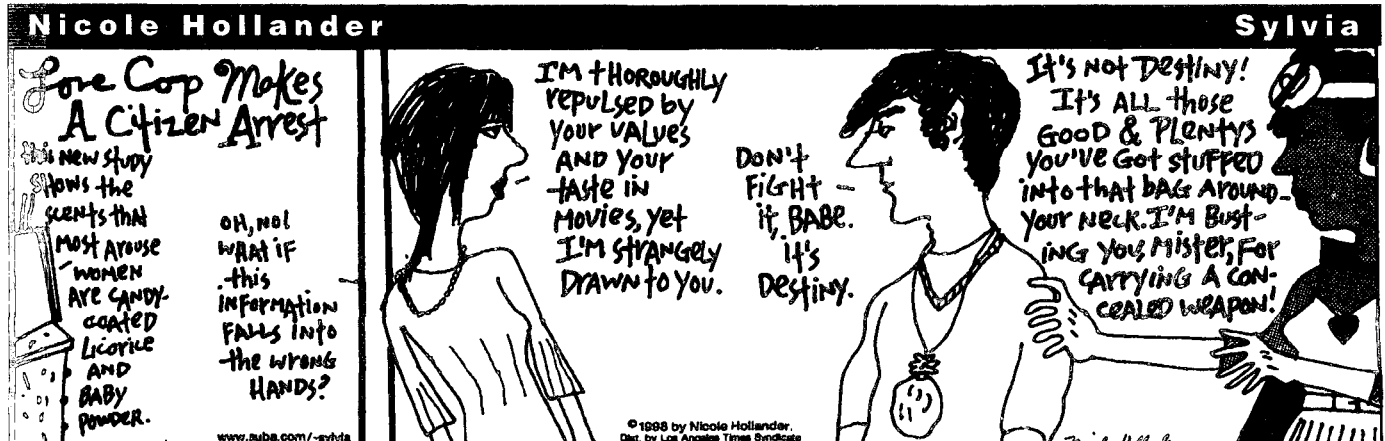
Pocketbook Protection

At first blush, California's Proposition 226—which would require unions to obtain authorization from members before using dues for political purposes—seems like old-fashioned union bashing ("California Schemin," April 5). But I still think it's an important first step.

Unions say that corporations should now be required to get their stockholders' permission before they make political contributions. Why stop there?

I propose a "Pocketbook Protection Act." Amend Proposition 226 to require every product on the market, from cars to chewing gum, to bear a label listing every political candidate or issue on which the company spent money during the past year, and the portion of the product's price going to that cause. For instance, if an automaker spent 1 percent of its income on donations to Republican candidates for Congress, this would show up as \$200 on the sticker of a \$20,000 minivan. If a prospective buyer doesn't want his or her money used for that purpose, he or she could decline to pay. *Voila*, an instant \$200 discount! What could be fairer?

William Mosley
Washington, D.C.



Caught in Netanyahu's Net

BY ROBIN SHULMAN

Qudsia Manko's first name states her case. In Arabic it means "Jerusalemite," and she was born to a family in Jerusalem that can trace its residence inside the Old City walls back hundreds of years.

But last year her Jerusalem identification card was confiscated by the Israeli Interior Ministry when she tried to sponsor her husband for residency in

these policies.

The group's petition charges that the requirements are an Israeli effort to diminish the number of Palestinians in Jerusalem. Since Israel annexed the east side of the city from Jordan in 1967, the government has tried to buttress its claims of a "unified capital" by installing more Jews and limiting Palestinian growth. With final status negotia-

(different from either Israeli citizens or residents of the West Bank and Gaza). Until late 1995, the policies regarding this group were consistent.

Then, without warning, the Israeli government began enforcing new, unpublished rules that revoked residency rights for Palestinians who had moved from Jerusalem's center to peripheral neighborhoods that stretch into the West Bank. The policy also cut off Palestinian Jerusalemites who had lived abroad extensively—even those who had renewed their travel documents according to government guidelines.

Manko, for instance, married a Jordanian citizen, and (because of an Israeli law that prohibited resident women from sponsoring foreign husbands) joined him in Amman. But she bore three of her six children in Jerusalem, and carefully followed the rules for renewing her residency when she came home for several months each year. When women were granted the right to sponsor foreign spouses in 1994, she and her family returned to Jerusalem—only to have their status as residents canceled.

There was no announcement of the new policy, no explanation when ID cards were confiscated and no real process for appeal, says Eliahu Abran, one of the lawyers petitioning the court. He says the ID cards of entire families have been seized without explanation when they answered summons to register adult children, applied for family reunification or tried to replace lost cards. In 1994, only 45 Jerusalem ID cards were seized; in 1996, after the new policy was implemented, 689 IDs were confiscated. Last year, 606 IDs were seized, with another 500 cases under deliberation.

The policy has caused a widespread panic among Palestinian residents of the city. According to historian Menachem Klein, as many as 20,000 Palestinian residents have returned to East Jerusalem (continued on next page)



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To protest harsh new policies, the Palestinian Authority set up a tent camp in Jerusalem.

the city. The only explanation came in a letter from the ministry: "You have ceased to be a resident of Israel," it read in Hebrew. "Your residency has expired. Your children's residency has expired. You have 15 days to leave the country."

Manko is a victim of harsh new requirements designed to clear Palestinians from disputed lands that have been vigorously enforced by the government of Benjamin Netanyahu. On April 6, Manko, 10 other Palestinian residents of Jerusalem and five non-governmental organizations petitioned Israel's High Court of Justice to restore their residency rights, return their identification cards and challenge the legality of

tions for the city scheduled for 1999 under the terms of the Oslo accords, Netanyahu is trying to establish a demographic stranglehold on Jerusalem. Indeed, Interior Minister Eli Suissa, who declined to comment for this article, was widely quoted last year saying, "We must increase the Jewish majority in Jerusalem to more than 80 percent. The confiscation of Jerusalem ID cards from Palestinians is my answer to this."

In a complicated system of ethnic, religious, residence and citizenship classifications, all Israelis and Palestinians carry color-coded identification cards. Manko and other Palestinian Jerusalemites are considered Israeli permanent residents without citizenship

the right

Resurrection of the Promise Keepers

BY FREDERICK CLARKSON

Last October, the Promise Keepers gathered more than half a million men on the Mall in Washington, D.C., for a historic event. But just four months later, the evangelical Christian men's group made headlines again. Promise Keepers founder Bill McCartney announced that because of a severe financial crisis all 345 members of the Promise Keepers central staff in Denver would be laid off by the end of March unless things turned around in a hurry.

By mid-April, thanks to a reported \$4 million dollars in donations from churches, 315 staffers had been rehired, and the Promise Keepers were again financially secure.

After three years of packing football stadiums in major cities around the country, attendance fell off dramatically in 1997. Some stadium events were only half-full. The group's ticket and paraphernalia sales were flagging, leading to quiet layoffs and organizational turmoil. The budget shortfall may have been as much as \$35 million.

(continued from previous page)

from outlying areas, and housing has become scarce. To protest the policies, Orient House, the Jerusalem headquarters of the Palestinian Authority, sponsored a tent camp just inside municipal borders, which soon filled with about 600 Palestinians afraid of losing their right to live and work in the city. Manko and her family were among them until the camp was dismantled in April to make room for a new community center that had its building permit, which was filed in 1974, suddenly approved.

Manko, who has moved her family of eight into her parents' home, knows that her petition could take months or even years to resolve. Yet, she says, "My mother is here, my father, my sisters, my brothers, my children's school, my husband's work. I don't know where else to go." ■

A number of factors lay behind the Promise Keepers' financial woes. The group, which has never drawn much beyond its narrow base in the evangelical community, simply saturated the market. Their stadium rallies were forced to compete against the gathering in Washington. With ticket prices as high as \$60 a piece, many men chose to attend only the more high-profile march. Additionally, the persistent efforts of critics

such as the National Organization for Women and the grass-roots coalition Equal Partners in Faith raised doubts about the Promise Keepers, limiting its public appeal and pushing more critical perspectives into the mainstream media.

Compounding the problem, key Promise Keeper leaders and supporters believe the group is playing a pivotal role in a Biblically prophesied "end-times" scenario, as catalysts for the final "harvest of souls" before the Messiah returns. Many believed that the group would be blessed with exponential growth. Unfortunately for the Promise Keepers, theology does not always make a good business plan.

Yet, McCartney decided last fall that tickets to this year's 19 stadium rallies, which kick off in Detroit on May 15, will be free to encourage followers to bring non-Christian friends for evangelization.

In a letter posted on the Promise Keepers' Web site, McCartney explains that a new program of corporate sponsorship will help to defray the costs of the stadium events. He writes that corporate sponsorships "are available ranging from \$75,000." Jerry Sloan of



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Project Toscin, a California-based research group, says the Promise Keepers are offering to trade their membership lists and demographic information in exchange for a \$200,000 donation.

Critics who follow the Promise Keepers are not surprised that the group is rebounding. Alfred Ross, president of the Center for Democracy Studies in New York and publisher of the investigative newsletter *PK Watch*, sees the group as "the third wave" of the religious right that is as significant as Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority or the empire of Pat Robertson. To Ross, the Promise Keepers epitomize the growth of the "infrastructure and dedication of the anti-democratic right." He points to the presence of more than 10,000 Promise Keeper cell groups as a fertile recruiting ground for the militant Christian Right.

Reports of the death of the Promise Keepers, it seems, have been greatly exaggerated. ■

Frederick Clarkson is the author of *Eternal Hostility: The Struggle Between Theocracy and Democracy* (Common Courage Press).

Ooh, That Smell ...

BY JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

Grand Bois, La., is a small town of around 300 on the Gulf of Mexico that used to be revered for its good fishing and Cajun cooking. These days it's better known for a putrid stench that permeates the air and a purplish fog that drapes the town on many summer days.

Grand Bois is one of Louisiana's poorest communities, with an unemployment rate of more than 40 percent. Many of the town's houses are old, worn down by heavy rains and oppressive heat. All of this makes the town an enticing target for corporate polluters.

The residents of Grand Bois, many of whom are American Indians, complain about burning eyes, respiratory problems and severe headaches. There has also been an ominous spike in the town's cancer rates. Residents point to a vast oilfield waste disposal dump that sits a few hundred feet outside of town as the culprit.

The Grand Bois Dump is one of the largest in the South. Every week, its two dozen open pits receive millions of gallons of oil waste from Exxon and other big oil companies. Oilfield waste

is loaded with a frightening roster of toxic compounds, including benzene, hydrochloric acid, lead and chlorine. The waste settles for months in the pits before it is injected into nearby underground wells.

Offshore oilfield waste is considered hazardous, and its disposal is strictly regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency, under the Resource Recovery and Conservation Act, the nation's main hazardous waste law, which was enacted in 1976 and over-

Continued on next page

WTO Sacrifices Turtles for Trade

BY JOEL BLEIFUSS

On April 6, the World Trade Organization (WTO) ruled that a provision of the Endangered Species Act aimed at saving the world's sea turtle population violates international trade law. The message is clear: For the WTO, trade always trumps the environment.

All eight of the world's sea turtle species are considered endangered or threatened. A 1989 provision of the Endangered Species Act requires that all shrimp imported into the United States be caught by boats using a "Turtle Excluder Device," or TED. TEDs, which cost about \$400 a piece, are credited with saving an estimated 15,000 sea turtles each year.

However, Thailand, Pakistan, India and Malaysia all have refused to install the devices. They brought a complaint against the United States before the WTO, charging that the ban against their shrimp was an unfair restraint of trade.



COURTESY OF THE SEA TURTLE RESTORATION PROJECT

The WTO agreed. Now, the United States must either revoke the law or pay hefty fines, which will be determined by the WTO. The Clinton administration has not chosen its course of action. However, U.S.

Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky, whose environmental record is only slightly better than that of the WTO, says the ruling "will not affect our efforts to protect endangered sea turtles." ■

appall-o-meter

BY DAVID FUTRELLE



The In These Times Index of Appall-O-Meter

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Bench Drunk

Trying a recent drunk-driving case apparently made Lakewood, Wash., Municipal Court Judge Ralph H. Baldwin very thirsty. After the jury returned a guilty verdict, Baldwin went out drinking with some of the jurors and then drove home with an open beer in his car, *The Associated Press* reports. According to investigators, after the trial ended the judge told jurors to "stay for a cold one." Climbing into his car after the celebration was over, Baldwin declared: "I might as well drink and drive, I do it all the time anyway." Baldwin, who said his comment was "a very poor attempt at humor," admits that when he saw what he'd

done "put down on paper, it looked awful." He later resigned from the bench.

All Apologies

Bill Clinton's "apology" for slavery during his recent tour of Africa, wasn't much more than a bit of political theater. After all, opposing slavery is about as controversial as opposing flesh-eating bacteria. But Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Texas) criticized Clinton's speech as yet another betrayal by the aging hippie. "Here's a flower child with gray hairs doing exactly what he did back in the '60s ... attacking his own country in a foreign land," DeLay told the *New York Times*. "He didn't talk about what's-his-name, Idi Amin, that killed 500,000 people in Uganda. He didn't apologize for that."

Page Rage

The American public seems to have forgiven President Clinton, whatever he may have done, but a group of Senate pages weren't quite so accommodating. Each year, pages pose for group portraits in front of the Senate president's chair, where a painting of the president hangs in the background. But this year, *USA*

Today reports, the Iowa pages voted to have Clinton's image erased from the portrait. Apparently with the Lewinsky flap and all, Clinton's picture made some of them feel a little creepy. "He's not the best role model for young people," one page explained.

PR Problems

The editors at *The Far Eastern Economic Review* were leafing through a little promotional magazine published by the authorities in Pusan, South Korea, when they came across a not-so-flattering description of the local townsfolk. "Pusanians are rather clumsy and simple-minded in nature due to their weary living conditions and lifestyle," read the brochure. "[They] speak in a peculiar accent that sounds crude and angry." ■

Stunned by a stupid statement?

Write to: Appall-O-Meter
c/o *In These Times*
2040 N. Milwaukee Ave.
Chicago, IL 60647
Enclose a copy of the appalling item.

Continued from previous page

hailed in 1986. But through a quirk of politics that tells much about the lobbying might of the oil industry, waste generated from land-based wells is not considered toxic, and its disposal is left up entirely to the states.

All Louisiana law requires is that oil waste dumps be located no closer than 500 feet from homes. But even this regulation isn't enforced in Grand Bois, where several homes are perched on the very edge of the pits. These feeble environmental standards have made Grand Bois a dumping ground for waste from sites throughout the South.

The *Congressional Record* of the debate on the Resource Recovery and Conservation Act, reveals the reason for

this double standard. "The regulation of oil field waste would cause a severe economic impact on the industry and oil and gas production in the U.S.," it reads. The exemption was moved through Congress with the help of three heavy hitters in the Louisiana delegation: former Sen. J. Bennett Johnston, Sen. John Breaux and Rep. Billy Tauzin. Since 1984, this powerful trio has raked in more than \$4 million in political contributions from the oil industry.

PR flacks from U.S. Liquids, the company that manages the Grand Bois dump, contend that the residents' symptoms are more likely the result of exposure to household cleaners or tree pollen. Another company official says the illnesses were probably psychosomatic.

Both U.S. Liquids and Exxon have gone to court in an unsuccessful attempt to keep journalists from reviewing records on the dump, saying that such reporting might "poison public opinion."

But this sleight of hand was effectively demolished when a toxicologist from Louisiana State University released a study in 1997 showing that more than 20 of the town's children were suffering from lead poisoning. Louisiana's right-wing governor, Mike Foster, a fanatical supporter of the dump, responded by trying to strip the toxicologist of state funding for future research.

"It's scary to know that our government would allow this to go on," says Danny Friloux, a Grand Bois resident. "The more we dig, the scarier it gets." ■

Media Critic

Taking it to the Streets

BY TRAVIS LEA

Attempting to bring a new breed of homeless newspaper to the New World, the *Big Issue*, a full-color, London-based homeless publication, launched its first issue on American soil in Los Angeles on April 2.

In contrast to its American counterparts like Chicago's *Street Wise* or San Francisco's *Street Sheet*, the *Big Issue* has a stylish aesthetic, with articles on pop culture and celebrity interviews. It is also replete with advertisements, many of them for the Body Shop, the British makers of organic body care products that helped to conceive and finance the magazine when it launched in London in 1991.

However, the *Big Issue* is missing the sharp political criticism and somber accounts of homelessness found in traditional American street papers. The magazine has drawn scathing criticism from publishers of those papers, who accuse it of watering down serious housing problems and using the homeless as a cheap and fashionable way to distribute the publication. Others suggest the magazine is merely an advertising vehicle for the Body Shop, whose U.S. sales have slumped in recent years. "What Starbucks did to the corner coffee shop, these guys will do to street papers," says Paul Bowdin, publisher of *Street Sheet*.

The two models of street papers are quite distinctive. At *Street Sheet*, for example, vendors keep all the profits from sales they make. "*Street Sheet* gives out free fifty-stacks every morning," explains Alvin Calloway, a former *Street Sheet* vendor who now coordinates distribution. "People are able to afford thirty-dollar-a-day rooms with our program." The *Big Issue*, which sells for \$1, gives the first twenty issues away for free, then charges vendors 40 cents per copy to get more.

Bowdin says traditional street papers

are just one aspect of a comprehensive support system for homeless people, helping them to jump start their lives. *Street Sheet*, for instance, is run by the nonprofit Coalition on Homelessness, which comprises groups working on practical goals such as creating low-income housing and promoting substance-abuse treatment. The paper receives no commercial funding, gathering money instead through individual donations and grants.

In contrast, after covering operating expenses, the British edition of the *Big Issue* shifts its profits into the "Big Issue

The *Big Issue* breaks away from the format of traditional street papers.

Foundation," which distributes grants and funds drug and alcohol dependency workshops for the homeless. The *Big Issue* plans to set up a similar organization in the United States. The London edition of the magazine receives 40 percent of its revenues from advertisers, and the other 60 percent through sales to the homeless. It gave more than a million dollars to the foundation last year.

The *Big Issue* started with an initial monthly press run of 20,000 copies in Los Angeles; the London version has a weekly circulation of about 90,000. There, the *Big Issue* supports about 600 vendors at any one time.

John Bird, founder and publisher of the *Big Issue*, says his magazine breaks the mold of homeless publications by offering up a flashy arts and society 'zine aimed at the general public. Bird says people who buy traditional street papers have no real interest in reading them—the purchase amounts to no

more than a handout. Eliminating the stigma of homelessness, he says, is an important part of addressing the problem. With the *Big Issue*, he explains, "homeless people are selling a paper that the general public want to buy. It's not a pity purchase. The more papers we sell, the more the more income we can create for homeless people."

Bird's argument doesn't fly with Jennafer Waggoner, publisher of *Making Change*, a smaller, more traditional, year-old street paper in Los Angeles. Waggoner calls Bird an "outsider" and criticizes him for having no homeless people on his editorial board. If Bird just wants the homeless to make money, she says, "then why aren't they out there selling toothpaste or deodorant. What we have with a newspaper is a viable means to talk about social changes."

Bird, who has already launched the *Big Issue* in South Africa and Australia, insists he has never brought the magazine to a city without an invitation from local homeless advocates. "It's another way of skinning a cat," he says, defending his operation. "I don't think anybody has a monopoly on solutions to homelessness. I don't think the United States has done any better at solving its homelessness problem than the British or any other people."

Waggoner fears that *Making Change* will be squeezed out by the colorful competition. To avoid an embarrassing controversy, Bird has offered to help *Making Change* survive, and is helping the paper to upgrade its computer and rent new office space. Waggoner says she has no choice but to accept the *Big Issue*'s aid.

With the first issue now on the streets, readers must decide whether the *Big Issue* is a boon to the homeless or, as critics contend, the real big issue is money. ■

Travis Lea is a freelance writer and radio producer in San Francisco.

A Valuable Lesson

BY RONALD ARONSON

Like it or not, if the left wants to become a relevant part of the American political landscape, it must learn to talk about values.

For many years, we on the left have had little to say about values because the right has pre-empted the debate by framing the discussion to suit its purposes. Conservatives apply "values," and the lack thereof, to individual behavioral failings—drugs, crime, welfare fraud, teen pregnancy—that allegedly result from bad government policies and liberal attitudes. Social values such as peace, family security and equality are not in the right's lexicon.

The need for a left-values agenda has never been more pressing. It becomes more urgent as the power of the market, the bottom line and the profit system transform our personal, social, intellectual, cultural and political life. Our society is now totally given over to, and dominated by, the market. Tradition, community, democracy and religion count for less and less. The main culprit of this decline is not the right's whipping-boys—liberalism or "the '60s"—but the relentless invasion of corporate capital into all aspects of our lives. A hyper-individualistic, profit-centered, bottom-line, market-driven social order violates deeply held American principles of community, equal opportunity and democracy. Hence, we are the ones to argue that humans should be motivated by something more profound than individual self-interest and economic calculation.

The left should counter the right's primary value—economic liberty—with values of its own: equality of opportunity, social justice, democracy. We should support the idea that a community's long-term well-being takes precedence over the short-term interests of the market. We should insist that the operations of the economy be judged and ordered by

extra-market values. In other words, our discussion of values should begin with the proposition that the economy serves society, not vice-versa. Accordingly, health-care needs should not be governed by considerations of profit and loss. Nor should the preservation of the earth be sacrificed to short-sighted concern for the bottom line. Similarly, we should not allow education—which used to stress cultural literacy, personal integrity and citizenship—to become synonymous with employable skills, resume-writing and self-packaging.

In 1996, Bill Clinton trumped Republicans by articulating a "Democratic values agenda," focusing on the fact that an individual's well-being depends on the well-being of the community. The left should have been cheering—even as it opposed the rightward drift of Clinton's economic and political programs. Indeed, Clinton's political direction makes a mockery of his rediscovery of the collective "we."

Unfortunately, values-talk often proceeds by incantation, as if we were all members of the same choir. It is the left's responsibility to defend and explain the nature of our values, not just to hold them. Values should be invoked to justify the specific ways that a society organizes its institutions and social space, not as objective truths. Values should be every discussion's starting-point, not its stopping-point.

Values-talk, if it is not to degenerate into babble, must be an invitation to debate. And that debate sorely needs a left perspective. Here at the Center for Democratic Values, an organization launched by the Democratic Socialists of America, we are planning to inject a left-values perspective into the national discourse by holding a series of "Left vs. Right Debates" that we hope will encourage and stimulate discussion across the country.

Participating in such values-talk could help us to construct the eventual platform from which a resurgent left launches itself. Values provide a powerful argument against the process whereby the market overwhelms the rest of society. The examination of our values can only help to create a climate where our voices will be heard when we raise the demand: "Put people first, not profits." ■

Ronald Aronson, the director of the Center for Democratic Values, is the author of *After Marxism* and teaches at Wayne State University in Detroit.

online

- Among the overwhelming collection of information at the United Nation's Web site (www.un.org), is the report from U.N. special investigator Bacre Waly Ndiaye, a lawyer from Senegal, who spent several weeks last fall visiting prisons in four states to study the use of the death penalty in the United States. In the report, he concludes, unsurprisingly, that "race, ethnic origin and economic status appear to be key determinants of who will, and who will not, receive a sentence of death."
- For details on the ongoing crisis of unpaid wages in Russia, where one-in-four workers are not paid regularly, contributing editor Fred Weir recommends a site put together by the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers Union (ICEM) at www.icem.org/campaigns/no_pay_cc/index.html.

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Don't Ask, Don't Tell

In testimony before the House Select Committee on Intelligence on March 16, the Central Intelligence Agency once again suffered a blow to its reputation. This time the injury was self-inflicted. The CIA's own top watchdog, Inspector General Frederick P. Hitz, admitted that although "dozens of individuals and a number of companies" involved in the agency's covert war against Nicaragua during the '80s were suspected drug traffickers, the CIA had legal authority to ignore their crimes as long as they were helping *contra* rebels fight the left-wing Sandinista government.

The CIA's complicity with drug traffickers was official policy.

By Martha Honey

Hitz revealed that between 1982 and 1995 the spy agency had an agreement with the Justice Department, allowing it to ignore drug trafficking by its "agents, assets and non-staff employees." The directive, known as a "Memorandum of Understanding" (MOU), did not exempt the agency's full-time, career employees, who are known as CIA "officials." However, the agency did not have to tell the Justice Department about the criminal activities of "agents" or "assets"—terms used interchangeably to refer to its paid and unpaid spies. Also exempt were CIA contractors, such as pilots, accountants and military trainers, who supplied the agency with specific goods and services rather than intelligence. "There was no official requirement to report on allegations of drug trafficking with respect to non-employees of the agency," Hitz told the committee.

Hitz said this agreement, which he termed "a rather odd history," has since been changed. But it was not until 1995—five years after the end of the war in Nicaragua and three years into Clinton's first term—that the agreement was revised to include agents, assets and contractors as "employees" whose suspected criminal activities, such as drug trafficking, must be reported to the Justice Department.

Disclosure of this agreement is another black eye for the CIA at a time when the agency is trying to distance itself from persistent allegations of drug trafficking, including the provocative August 1996 "Dark Alliance" series in the *San Jose Mercury News*. Veteran journalists, investigators, policy analysts and members of Congress interviewed by *In These Times* all say they were unaware of the directive. "This previously unknown agreement enabled the CIA to keep known drug smugglers out of jail and on the payroll of the American taxpayer," says Peter Kornbluh, a senior analyst with the National Security Archive, who has written extensively on the CIA and the war in Nicaragua. "CIA officials realized collaborating with pro-*contra* drug smugglers was important to the goal of overthrowing the Sandinistas and it sought protection from the Justice Department."

In 1982, when the MOU was implemented, the United States was gearing up for a covert war in Central America aimed at toppling the Sandinistas. Over the next eight years, the CIA hired scores of Latin American, Cuban and American spies, as well as dozens of aviation, fishing and real estate companies, to support the *contras*. Simultaneously, cocaine began flooding into the United States, fueling the crack epidemic that has devastated Los Angeles, Baltimore and other cities.

David MacMichael, who was a senior CIA officer in the early '80s, says that while he was not aware of this MOU, he does recall that "in 1981, [CIA Director William] Casey went to attorney general [William French] Smith looking for a blanket exemption from prosecution for CIA officers for crimes committed in the line of duty." Smith demurred, he says.

Since the mid-'80s, a spate of media reports, congressional inquiries, and court cases in the United States and Central America have linked *contra* officials and collaborators with cocaine traffickers, money launderers and various front companies. Many of those implicated also claimed or were alleged to be working for the CIA. In 1996, the accusations

erupted anew with the publication of Gary Webb's *Mercury News* series, which detailed how a Nicaraguan drug ring used black street gangs to sell crack cocaine in Los Angeles. Over the years, the CIA has repeatedly denied allegations that it dealt with drug dealers.

Those denials have been championed by *Washington Post* reporter Walter Pincus, a specialist in national security affairs and a leading critic of the *Mercury News* series. Pincus, who has yet to report on Hitz's testimony, says he had not been previously aware of the directive. "I am still trying to get a clarification of it," he says, adding that it may not be very significant. "All it admits is that what they were doing was legal. On occasion they were dealing with people who may or may not have been dealing in drugs."

In December 1985, reporters Robert Parry and Brian Barger wrote the first story tying the CIA's *contra* operation to cocaine smuggling. The piece for The Associated Press angered Reagan administration officials, who tried unsuccessfully to block its publication. During the *contra* war, most of the media either ignored or discredited the drug trafficking reports. Parry maintains that his pursuit of this story helped cost him jobs at AP and *Newsweek*. "Historically we were correct," Parry says. "We pointed to a serious problem in a timely fashion, and we were all punished and ridiculed. The reporters who put this story down have gone on to fame and fortune."

Parry calls Hitz's disclosure "extremely significant." "It amounts to a blank check for dealing with drug traffickers," he says. "The agency is admitting that it engaged in covering up drug crimes by the *contras* and that this was legal."

Major media also ignored the 1989 findings of Sen. John Kerry's (D-Mass.) Subcommittee on Terrorism, Narcotics and International Operations. The Kerry committee's two-year investigation turned up substantial evidence of cocaine smuggling and money laundering by persons connected to the *contras* and the CIA. Among the conclusions of its 1,166-page report:

- "Drug traffickers used the *contra* war and their ties to the *contras* as a cover for their criminal enterprises in Honduras and Costa Rica. Assistance from the drug lords was crucial to the *contras*, and the traffickers in turn promoted and protected their operations by associating with the *contra* movement."
- "Drug traffickers provided support to the *contras* and used the supply network of the *contras*. *Contras* knowingly received both financial and material assistance from the drug traffickers."
- "Drug traffickers contributed cash, weapons, planes, pilots, air supply services and other materials to the *contras*."
- "In each case, one or another U.S. government agency had information regarding these matters either while they were occurring, or immediately thereafter."

The report was all but ignored by the three major networks and buried in the back pages of the major newspapers. Combined, the stories in the *Washington Post*, *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* totalled less than 2,000 words.

At the March congressional hearing, Hitz explained that the MOU between the agency and the Justice Department was modified slightly in 1986, prohibiting the CIA from paying

"There are instances where CIA did not, in an expeditious or consistent fashion, cut off relationships with individuals supporting the contra program, who were alleged have engaged in drug-trafficking activity," says CIA Inspector General Frederick P. Hitz.

those suspected of involvement in drug trafficking. The CIA, however, could legally continue to use suspected drug smugglers and not report their activities, as long as they received no money from the agency.

But for major drug traffickers, being allowed to operate under the CIA's umbrella was payment enough. The Kerry committee's report, along with most press accounts of the CIA-cocaine connection, alleges that the *contras* accepted money and supplies from drug smugglers and money launderers—not the other way around.

John Mattes, a young public defender in Miami in the mid-'80s, stumbled upon the allegations of drug trafficking by Cuban-Americans working with the *contras*. Mattes, who represented several cocaine traffickers and soldiers-of-fortune who testified before the Kerry committee, says traffickers were seeking protection, not money, from the CIA. "There was a marriage of convenience between the *contras* and the coke smugglers," he says. The smugglers had cash, planes and pilots, while the *contras* had intelligence, airstrips and, most importantly, unimpeded access to the United States. "And that, to a drug smuggler," he says, "is worth all the tea in China."

During the '80s, the CIA conducted several internal inquiries and announced it found no substantial evidence that *contra* leaders and other persons working for the CIA had connections to cocaine traffickers. Then, the "Dark Alliance" series touched off a volatile, nationwide controversy over the

agency's role in introducing crack to Southern California street gangs. To help quell public and congressional anger, both the CIA and Justice Department launched separate internal investigations. Both reports were scheduled to be released last December, but were withheld at the last minute without explanation.

Attorney General Janet Reno subsequently announced that she had blocked the release of the Justice Department report (rumored to be the more substantial and significant of the two) for unspecified "law enforcement reasons." Justice Department sources told *In These Times* that one of the people named in the report is a government witness in an ongoing criminal case, whose identity must be protected. However, Jack Blum, a Washington attorney and investigator for the Kerry committee, doubts that the Justice Department will ever release its report. Blum says law enforcement officials often claim disclosures will jeopardize ongoing cases, and he wonders why the report was not simply edited to protect the informant's identity.

In late January, the CIA released a declassified version of volume one of its two-part report. Entitled "The California Story," this 149-page report focuses on the cocaine network described in the "Dark Alliance" series, which detailed the activities of two Nicaraguan drug smugglers, Danilo Bandon and Juan Norwin Meneses. In the early '80s, Meneses and Bandon supplied large quantities of powder cocaine to Ricky Ross, an African-American drug dealer, who then turned it into crack for sale to two Los Angeles gangs. Webb alleges that the Nicaraguans gave some of their drug profits to top *contra* officials who were working with the CIA.

Hitz called the CIA's 18-month investigation "the most comprehensive and exhaustive ever conducted" by the agency. He told the congressional committee: "We found absolutely no evidence to indicate that the CIA as an organization or its employees were involved in any conspiracy to bring drugs into the United States." But, taken in conjunction with what Hitz said about the MOU, "employees" here may pertain only to CIA career officials—not agents, assets or contractors.

Webb, whose reporting touched off the controversy, describes the report as "schizophrenic." "The Executive Summary says there's no CIA involvement," says Webb. "The actual report shows there are CIA fingerprints all over this drug operation."

For example, upon the release of volume one, CIA Director George Tenet proclaimed that the Agency "left no stone unturned" in reaching its conclusion that the CIA had "no direct or indirect" ties to Bandon and Meneses. Yet, the report contains a compendium of indirect links between the CIA's *contra* army and drug traffickers. The most obvious admissions contained in the report include:

- An October 22, 1982, cable from the CIA's Directorate of Operations that reports, "There are indications of links between (a U.S. religious organization) and two Nicaraguan counter-revolutionary groups. ... These links involve an exchange in (the United States) of narcotics for arms." The report goes on to say that there was to be a meeting in Costa Rica of *contras*, several U.S. citizens and Renato Peña, a convicted drug dealer who was part of Meneses'

operation. Astonishingly, a November 3, 1982, cable from CIA headquarters says that the agency decided "not to pursue the matter further" because of "the apparent participation of U.S. persons throughout."

- The CIA directly intervened in the 1983 "Frogman Case," in which San Francisco police seized 430 pounds of cocaine and arrested 50 individuals, including a number of Nicaraguans. Because the CIA feared the agency's connections to some of the contras involved had "potential for disaster," an unidentified CIA lawyer convinced the U.S. Attorney in San Francisco and Justice Department officials to cancel plans to take depositions from *contra* leaders in Costa Rica and to return \$36,800 seized in the drug raid to one of the *contra* factions. "There are sufficient factual details which would cause certain damage to our image and program in Central America," CIA assistant general counsel Lee Strickland wrote in a August 22, 1984, memo quoted in the report.
- Blandon and Meneses met on various occasions with the *contras'* military commander, Enrique Bermudez, who worked for the CIA. At one meeting in Honduras in 1982, Bermudez, arguing that "the ends justify the means," asked the pair for help "in raising funds and obtaining equipment" and arms for the *contras*. After the meeting, a group of *contras* escorted Blandon and Meneses to the Tegucigalpa airport, where the pair was arrested by Honduran authorities because they were carrying \$100,000 in cash, profits from a Bolivian drug deal. The *contras* intervened and the money was returned to Blandon and Meneses. The report inexplicably concludes that there is no evidence that Bermudez knew the duo were drug traffickers, even though CIA cables show the agency was aware that Meneses had been a "drug king-pin" since the '70s.

At the congressional hearings, lawmakers cited these and other portions of the report, questioning the agency's capacity to investigate itself. Among the most vocal critics were Los Angeles Democratic Reps. Maxine Waters and Juanita Millender-McDonald, whose districts have been the epicenter of the crack epidemic. Waters charged that the report was "fraught with contradictions and illogical conclusions," saying that the CIA's cleverly-worded denials of links to drug traffickers in Southern California "defies the evidence."

Volume two of the report, which covers the entire Nicaraguan war, was scheduled to be turned over to the House and Senate intelligence committees in late March. But, as of mid-April, CIA officials told *In These Times*, the report had not been released to Congress. In his congressional testimony, Hitz said that volume two will contain "a detailed treatment of what was known to CIA regarding dozens of people and a number of companies connected in some fashion to the *contra* program or the *contra* movement, that were the subject of any sort of drug trafficking allegations."

Previewing the report, Hitz admitted: "There are instances where CIA did not, in

an expeditious or consistent fashion, cut off relationships with individuals supporting the *contra* program, who are alleged to have engaged in drug trafficking activity or take action to resolve the allegation." Several congressional sources say that they suspect the report will never be released.

While the precise wording of the MOU has not been made public, some say the directive may be considerably broader than implied at the hearing. At one point in his testimony, Hitz said the MOU applied to "intelligence agencies," indicating that it also may include the dozen or so U.S. agencies involved in intelligence work, not just the CIA. Hitz declined requests for an interview.

But the CIA may not be able to get away without further disclosures. The National Security Archive and other public interest groups, as well as Reps. John Conyers (D-Mich.) and Waters, are mounting a campaign for the declassification and release of the text of the MOU, the Justice Department report, volume two of the CIA report, tens of thousands of pages of documents and hundreds of interviews compiled by the two agencies in the course of their internal investigations. Attorney Blum warns that CIA officials who testified before the Kerry committee may have perjured themselves in denying they knew of any links between the CIA, the *contras* and cocaine traffickers. And investigative journalists Parry and Webb, among others, say Hitz's admission may be the smoking gun that conclusively proves that the CIA colluded with and then concealed its involvement with cocaine traffickers. ■

Martha Honey is director of the Peace and Security program at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C. During the '80s, she covered the war in Nicaragua as a journalist in Costa Rica.

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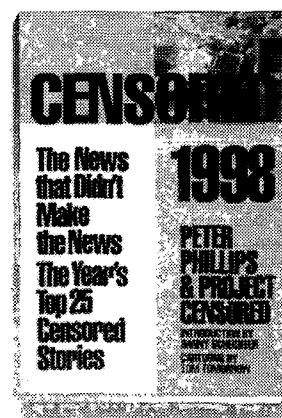
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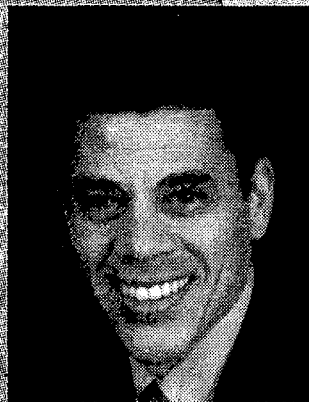
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RADIO ACTIVISTS



"Too few people control too much media," says the Rev. Jesse Jackson.



"These issues are fundamental to our democracy," says FCC chairman William E. Kennard.

Can media diversity be saved?

BY JOHN NICHOLS

The voices of racial, economic and intellectual diversity can still be heard in urban America on Dayton's WRNB, Little Rock's KFYX, Chicago's WVON and other small, locally owned radio stations across the country. But if the frenetic pace of media conglomeration continues, those voices may not survive the century in which radio was born.

Media conglomerates are buying up radio stations of all sizes at a staggering rate. Rep.

John Conyers (D-Mich.), the ranking Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, maintains that the United States faces "an emergency so great that the future of our very democracy will depend on how we respond."

This emergency has prompted the Rev. Jesse Jackson to launch a fledgling assault on the evolution of a corporate oligopoly within broadcast media. "At the end of the day, too few people control too much media, and they are too distant from where the rest of us live," Jackson told

In These Times. "We want to build a massive movement to democratize the airwaves ... a movement that will have broad implications for our country, broad implications for democracy and broad implications for the common people."

Such a movement could not arrive too soon for Melody Spann-Cooper, president and general manager of WVON. "Voice Of the Negro." The station has survived advertising segregation, racial stereotyping, political intrigue, and the challenges imposed by a 15-hour-a-day broadcast schedule and a mere 1,000 watts of power. It has emerged as an independent alternative to corporate radio's cookie-cutter programming. Whether it can survive the Telecommunications Reform Act of 1996, however, is a different question. "We're in a fight for survival, and right now it doesn't seem like the government's on our side," Spann-Cooper says. "The whole structure seems to be weighted against the small people, the independents."

Owned and operated by Spann-Cooper's family, which has deep roots in Chicago, WVON is woven into the fabric of the city's South and West sides. Yet thanks to the Telecommunications Reform Act, the station is the target of numerous multimillion-dollar takeover attempts. "In the last year and a half, I've had at least five offers to purchase the station," she says. "The amount of money they are willing to spend for a 15-hour-a-day, 1000-watt station is astounding."

Though media conglomerates claim that the corporate bottom line will require them to maintain a diversity of programming in urban areas—if not a diversity of ownership—Spann-Cooper says local control is vital to maintaining independence and a connection with the community.

However, federal policies that helped independent stations stay afloat, such as limits on the number of stations a firm can own in a single market and tax incentives that encouraged minority and women owners, have been dropped, making it more appealing for WVON and stations like it to sell. "In this great country, they say you've got to pull yourselves up by the bootstraps," she says. "Now, they're trying to buy the boots back."

In a stunning number of cases around the United States, the boots have already been sold. When the Telecommunications Reform Act went into effect two years ago, members of minority groups owned 3.1 percent of the nation's commercial radio stations. Today, minority ownership has dropped to 2.8 percent, and that figure is rapidly falling as telecommunications giants target urban markets. As it stands today, minorities control three-tenths of 1 percent of the broadcast industry's asset value. And without a concerted action to

Jackson and Conyers are hatching plans to make the threat to media diversity a front-burner issue.



reverse the current trend, those figures soon could be looked back upon as evidence of "the good-old days" of diversified media ownership. "By the year 2000," says Kofi Ofori, who monitors media conglomeration for the Civil Rights Forum, "there will be very few, if any, minority-owned radio or television stations in the major markets in this country."

When Congress overhauled the structure of American communications law in 1996, it opened the door to the most rapid expansion of broadcast media monopolies in American history. In the past two years, 40 percent of radio stations have changed hands. Prior to passage of the Telecommunications Reform Act, no single corporation owned more than 80 radio stations. But within one year after passage of the act, the nation's ten-largest corporate radio groups owned 820 sta-

tions. A single company, Hicks, Muse, Tate & Furst, owns 320 stations, and some analysts project that it will own as many as 1,000 stations by 2000.

The Civil Rights Forum reports that, on average, in each of the nation's top 100 radio markets, six companies control 92 percent of the advertising revenue and 87 percent of the listening audience. "The entrenched monopolists are being strengthened," says Thomas H. Castro, whose El Dorado Communications Inc. owns eleven radio stations in Los Angeles, Houston, Dallas and several other markets. "This is a little guy versus big guy issue and, at least in part because of federal policies, the little guys are getting wiped out."

Surprisingly, Jackson, Spann-Cooper and Castro have an ally in William Kennard, the new chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Kennard, a veteran Washington-based communications lawyer and former assistant general counsel for the National Association of Broadcasters, replaced Reed Hundt as FCC chairman last fall. He offers a disarmingly blunt assessment of the current situation: "There are many people in the radio business who feel consolidation is very good for America," he says. "They're saying, 'Don't worry, be happy. Buy stock. Listen to the radio. Everything will be fine.'"

Those people, he says, are missing the point: "In a society where most people get all their news and information from the broadcast media, how can we have a strong democracy when the medium is concentrated in the hands of a few people? And in a society that is becoming increasingly minority—by the middle of the next century almost 50 percent of the people in this country will be African-American, Hispanic and Latino—how can we have a media business in which we have no say in these companies?"

The disappearance of minority-owned media is not the

only issue. Jackson is quick to argue that resegregation of media ownership is merely a symptom of the broader disease: oligopoly control of the nation's communications infrastructure. "One man owns the Fox network, Madison Square Garden, 22 television stations, the *New York Post*, and now the Los Angeles Dodgers," he says, describing Rupert Murdoch. "Why should one man own so much of the media? Even if America was 100 percent white, this would be wrong."

Jackson and Conyers are hatching plans to make the danger posed by media conglomerates a front-burner issue in America. Jackson, whose wide-ranging agenda often pulls him in multiple directions, seems to be genuinely passionate about the issue—not merely because of his concern about the impact the Telecommunications Act has had on minority ownership, but because of his uneasiness with the growing economic and political power of multinational corporations. "When you revive monopoly, you raise the price of stations," he says. "You remove competition. You remove access. You remove local programming. This undercuts the free flow of information and the democratic process. These are issues that matter to people and there is a broad constituency for these issues of media democracy, and we intend to organize it into a political force."

The veteran civil rights leader plans to hold forums modeled on the March event in Chicago, which drew together FCC officials, members of Congress, minority broadcasters, academics and activists. In the coming months, he plans to sponsor such gatherings in Atlanta, Houston, Detroit and Los Angeles—and eventually take the issue to Washington.

Jackson and his aides talk, in the short term, of building a movement that will pressure the FCC to put a hold on media mergers until the agency can hold hearings that will examine the ramifications, restore incentives for minority ownership and assure that new radio and television technologies contain public-interest requirements. Eventually, Jackson says, he would like to see the Telecommunications Reform Act repealed and replaced by laws that break up media conglomerates, promote diverse ownership and provide increased support for public and community broadcasting. Jackson envisions a march of thousands from the FCC headquarters to the Capitol.

The dangers of corporate conglomeration and monopoly were once part of the national discourse. In the early years of this century, monopoly was such a dirty word that during the wild, four-way presidential race of 1912, Woodrow Wilson, Teddy Roosevelt, William Howard Taft and Eugene V. Debs each sought to outdo the others with anti-monopoly rhetoric. Wilson won thanks in no small part to speeches penned by Louis Brandeis, which conveyed a quasi-religious determination to do battle with the forces of accumulated capital. "Which do you want?" demanded Wilson during a 1912 speech in Lincoln, Neb. "Do you want to live in a town patronized by some great combination of capitalists who pick it out as a suitable place to plant their industry and draw you into their employment? Or do you want to see your sons and your brothers and your husbands build up businesses for

themselves under the protection of laws which make it impossible for any giant, however big, to crush them and put them out of business?"

As the years passed, anti-corporate and anti-monopoly rhetoric became less a feature of American politics—or, at the least, less a feature of major media reporting on American politics. But, as late as the '50s, major party platforms still warned of the dangers of amalgamation and the concentration of wealth, particularly when it came to the airwaves. With the demise of individually owned, community-based industries, and the rise of corporate political action committees, came a softening, and ultimately the virtual elimination, of a serious critique of the dangers posed by oligopoly in the mainstream political dialogue.

Jackson isn't advancing a new platform, as much as attempting to restore a vital missing link in American politics—an understanding that government has the right and the responsibility to regulate corporate concentration. And he has allies. Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-Minn.) has said he will seek to make monopoly control of communications and other sectors of the economy an issue if he seeks the Democratic presidential nod in 2000, while Rep. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), wants to see the Congressional Progressive Caucus take up the issue. With the support of powerfully placed Democrats in Congress, like Conyers and Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.), as well as small broadcasters and civil rights groups, the prospects for shifting the nature of the dialogue about media monopoly seem more vibrant than at any time in recent decades.

The potential role that Kennard could play in that scenario cannot be over-estimated. The five-member FCC board is clearly divided on ownership issues. Kennard and the two other Democratic commissioners, while relatively open to dialogue about monopoly issues, face intense pressure from media giants and politicians who depend on their money to finance their campaigns. Thus, the commissioner is unlikely to act aggressively without some evidence of public support. "What Kennard lacks, and what members of Congress lack, at this point, is a mass movement to support their efforts to address these issues," says Robert McChesney, a University of Wisconsin communications professor. "We need to build a movement so that, when Chairman Kennard and the members of Congress propose progressive reforms, there will be people in the streets to support them."

Ultimately, says Kennard, the debate must be national and broad-based if there is to be a reversal of the concentration of media ownership. "This is a civil rights issue," he says. "This issue cannot come down to a battle between the rich and the very wealthy—as do so many of the battles we have in Washington. These issues are fundamental to our democracy." ■

John Nichols is the editorial page editor for *The Capital Times in Madison, Wis.* He covers national politics for *The Progressive*.

Too HOT to handle

The biography that the New York publishing giants wouldn't touch

BY JEFFERSON DECKER

When her agent told her that she had just gotten a call from Phyllis Grann, Carol Felsenthal knew that it could only be bad news. It was last January, two months after Felsenthal had turned in an 800-page manuscript to her publisher, the New York-based Viking imprint. Felsenthal, a Chicago-based author, had spent four years composing the book, a biography of the media titan S. I. "Si" Newhouse Jr., and Viking's lawyers were supposedly vetting the copy. Now Grann, the president of Viking's parent company, Penguin, Putnam Inc., wanted to talk about the book with Felsenthal's agent, Flip Brophy.

One week later, over lunch with Brophy and Viking President Susan Petersen, Grann dropped the bomb. The manuscript, she said, was great; Felsenthal a very good writer. She insisted that she loved Felsenthal's previous books, especially her biography of *Washington Post* publisher Katharine Graham, which had been published by Grann in 1993. Grann had just one problem with the

Newhouse book: There was hardly a page in the entire manuscript that didn't include a reference to a friend. And rather than publish something that would complicate her personal and business relationships, she decided to kill the book. Felsenthal, Grann assured Brophy, would be paid the remainder of her advance. But her book would never be published by Viking.

Grann, who did not return calls from *In These Times*, later disputed the details of the conversation to a reporter from National Public Radio. But a Viking spokesman confirmed it in substance. "The feeling here is that it would have been inappropriate for Viking to publish the Felsenthal book because so many people mentioned in the book are close to the new executives here," he explains. "Carol's absolutely right," insists Al Silverman, who was Felsenthal's editor at Viking until he retired in December 1997. "She was dropped because of the relationship between Newhouse and the top people at Viking Penguin and the effect [of the book] on the publishing house."

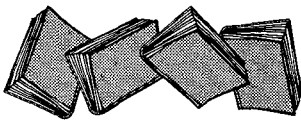


PHOTOS: S.I. NEWHOUSE BY MARINA GARNIER; CAROL FELSENTHAL BY MICHAEL AVRAMSON

After a decade of mergers, takeovers and high-profile sales, the commercial publishing industry is largely owned by a few huge conglomerates. According to a recent story in the *New York Times*, just eight companies control more than half of the entire U.S. book market. And each of these firms is much more powerful than its market share. At any given time, an author may be publishing his book with a publishing house in one conglomerate, planning to sell an excerpt to a magazine belonging to another, and hoping to get reviewed in the newspapers and magazines owned by a third or fourth. Meanwhile, his publisher is trying to sell paperback rights of dozens of different books to imprints owned by the competition. This concentration of the industry has not escaped attention—especially by journalists and academics on the left.

Still, it's not always clear what's at stake. Some people contend that the profit motive itself will ineluctably degrade the quality and diversity of American books. Others worry that top executives at behemoth media companies will be able to impose their personal whims on a vast array of content, or use their cultural arms to promote a hidden business or political agenda. Some moguls, notably News Corporation chief Rupert Murdoch, seem intent on proving their critics right. In February, Murdoch ordered the publisher HarperCollins, which he controls, to kill a memoir by Christopher Patten, the last British governor of Hong Kong. (Patten is critical of the Chinese government in Beijing, and Murdoch, who has business interests in China, wanted to make sure his most-favored-capitalist status with the Communist leadership remained intact.)

Patten survived. His plight made the front page of the *Wall Street Journal* and his manuscript was quickly picked up by a rival publisher. Felsenthal's trek was more arduous. Her case suggests another, more disturbing, consequence of media concentration—the complex web of incestuous relationships that mergers and acquisitions breed. Any industry that contains a small number of firms, all headquartered in one city, and whose employees often draw paychecks from two or three firms at the same time, is difficult to scrutinize. And when the industry in question happens to control the media used to monitor it, the threat of self-censorship is startlingly real.



Felsenthal is no stranger to powerful media figures who like to shield their lives—private and professional—from public view. In 1993, G. P. Putnam's Sons published her *Power, Privilege and the Post: The Katharine Graham Story*. Densely packed with information about Graham's personal life and stories of intrigue at her publications, the book attempts to provide a balanced take on the life of one of this century's most important publishers. Felsenthal insists that she is neither a hagiographer nor a scandal-monger, but an "objective" historian—or at least as objective as she possibly can be. "I'm not Kitty Kelley," she says.

About a month after publication, Graham's lawyers sent a letter to Putnam. Fifteen pages single-spaced, the letter

detailed a list of grievances about the book. Felsenthal spent two months going through boxes of index cards, files and tapes, reproofing the facts in her book one by one. Graham's forces eventually backed off, but the damage had already been done. During those two months, the book sank. Hard cover copies didn't sell well. Ted Turner's cable television network canceled a deal to turn the book into a made-for-television movie. And despite being excerpted in *Vanity Fair* and reviewed in a dozen newspapers and magazines, no publisher picked up the paperback rights. Felsenthal privately blamed Phyllis Grann—then Putnam's president—for not doing enough to support the book when it came under fire.

Still, Felsenthal says she "had no idea what real power was" until she began to work on her book about Newhouse. Graham, after all, has never had complete control over more than two major media outlets: the *Post* and *Newsweek*. Through Advance Publications, the Newhouse family owns countless properties in several different media. The list includes 26 local newspapers, including the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, the *Newark Star-Ledger* and the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*; all the magazines of the Condé Nast publishing group, including *GQ*, *Vanity Fair* and *Details*; the *New Yorker*, which is technically not a part of Condé Nast; and interests in book publishing. Until very recently, the Newhouses also owned Random House, America's most prestigious publisher.

In fact, the Newhouse empire is so vast that Felsenthal found it difficult to find people who could talk to her without some sort of conflict of interest. "If it wasn't the actual person I was trying to interview who had a connection to Newhouse, then he was involved with a woman who was working for [the Newhouse-owned magazine] *Glamour* or had a book contract with [Newhouse-owned imprint] Ballantine." At one point in the process, she mailed interview requests to the editors or publishers of the Condé Nast magazines, the *New Yorker*, and each of Newhouse's newspapers. She received but one reply. And that was just her letter, returned to her with "Si demands his privacy" scrawled on the side.

Still, Felsenthal tracked down more than 400 people who were willing to be interviewed—including high school classmates, retired editors and a close family member. She reports on everything, from Newhouse's table manners (he is said to eat remarkably quickly, rarely pausing for conversation even at business lunches) and what he wore to work during his early days at Condé Nast (informal sweaters and loafers he slipped off while in his office), to his discovery of a young British journalist named Tina Brown, whom he convinced to take over *Vanity Fair*, and his ousting of long-time *New Yorker* editor William Shawn. The portrait that emerges, she says, is of a "shy, private, meek man" driven by a quest for prestige. "He fancies himself to be a real intellectual, and I think he is," she says. "He likes intellectual things, he likes good writing."

In this sense, he is hardly a typical tycoon. His father, Sam, amassed a fortune by gobbling up local newspapers, driving the competition out of business, and then enjoying the huge profits of a monopoly. Si, on the other hand, has tended to buy properties that are considered prestigious—even if they end up bleeding red ink. "I'm not out to indict Newhouse," Felsenthal says. "I just think he's a foolish businessman. ... Si would never have

it in him to buy a down-and-out publisher and try to make it better. He buys the best that there is." Then he begins to meddle, sometimes with disastrous results: The *New Yorker*, for instance, has not only suffered several blows to its reputation since Newhouse took over, but it currently loses an estimated \$12 to \$15 million per year. Silverman, Felsenthal's editor, calls her portrait "very tight, well written [and] a balanced account, considering its subject."

In fact, it was Silverman who actually proposed the project to Felsenthal, not vice-versa. That was in 1993, at a meeting in which Felsenthal was trying to pitch a biography of Supreme Court justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. A few days later, Silverman sent her a letter. "Everyone in our house is 100 percent behind you and the project," he wrote. "If you strike bumpy roads along the way, we'll be here to help you."

As it happened, the bumpy roads came from Viking, not Newhouse. In November 1996, Pierson PLC, a British company that owns Viking (as well as Penguin books, *The Economist* and dozens of other properties) announced that it would acquire Putnam Berkeley Inc., an American publisher with several highly profitable imprints, for \$336 million from MCA. As soon as the deal went down, Pierson announced that the president of the new Penguin, Putnam Inc. would be Grann. In publishing since 1960, Grann has a legendary ability to sniff out best-sellers; even before Putnam merged with Viking and Penguin, *Publishers Weekly* called her the "most powerful woman in publishing." Then, in April 1997, another executive with close ties to Newhouse, former Random House vice-president Petersen, joined Penguin Putnam as Viking's president. Despite worrying about what the new management would think of her book, Felsenthal continued to work with Silverman, and in November 1997 turned in a completed manuscript.



When she found out that Viking had killed the book, Brophy, Felsenthal's agent, started shopping it around to about a dozen other houses. She eventually contacted every major commercial publishing house in New York. There were no takers; the book was radioactive. An editor at Simon & Schuster begged Brophy not to even send him a copy. "He would have liked it, he was that kind of guy," Felsenthal offers. "But he knew that if he were to accept it, the next time he sent a book over to be excerpted by *Vanity Fair* or the *New Yorker* he wouldn't get the reception he wanted."

Finally, Brophy hooked up Felsenthal with Seven Stories Press, an independent house in New York's Tribeca neighborhood. Founded three years ago by publisher Daniel Simon, a veteran editor with experience at Norton and Four Walls Eight Windows, Seven Stories produces about 25 books each year and is best known for its new fiction. But its nonfiction list includes a number of books about television and the media. Simon read Felsenthal's manuscript and immediately signed on. "I was as scared of Newhouse as the next guy," he says.

"But if a small, independent press like Seven Stories doesn't do this then, well, we ought to just hang up our hats." Of course, he might not have quite as much to fear from Newhouse as Grann does. Simon admits that his editorial entanglements are more likely to be with other lower Manhattan independents—like Soho or Verso—than with the commercial publishers in Midtown.



So Felsenthal wasn't completely shut out of the market. *Citizen Newhouse: A Portrait of a Media Merchant* is scheduled to come out this fall. Yet, the unwillingness of a mainstream commercial publisher—any mainstream commercial publisher—to pick up her manuscript is disturbing.

In Grann's defense, she is hardly the first executive to decline to publish a story because it posed a major conflict of interest. The problem is not so much Grann's unwillingness to go with something risky, but a publishing industry where everyone else is similarly conflicted. Equally disturbing is how casually this self-censorship went on. It's unclear that anyone actually was pressured by Newhouse to stop the book. "I'm convinced," says Felsenthal, "that Si Newhouse never issued an edict saying, 'There is this woman out there who is writing a book. Please don't answer her letters or her telephone calls.'"

Ironically, while Felsenthal was shopping her manuscript around Manhattan this winter, Newhouse was negotiating to greatly reduce his stake in American book publishing. On March 23, he sold Random House to Bertelsmann AG, a media conglomerate based in Gütersloh, Germany. Bertelsmann, which already owns the American imprints Bantam, Doubleday and Dell, now controls more than 10 percent of the U.S. book market. Newhouse, according to the *New York Times*, pocketed \$1.4 billion and announced plans to concentrate on his newspaper and magazine empires. Felsenthal jokes that she ought to offer her book back to Viking since Grann and Newhouse are no longer quite so entangled. But this is gallows humor. Big publishing, already too small to find a place for her work, just got even smaller. ■

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Teamsters, Take Two

By Jane Slaughter

Teamster reformers tap Ken Hall to challenge James Hoffa

Hoping that memories of the Teamsters' victory over United Parcel Service (UPS) last August are stronger than those of Ron Carey's downfall, the Teamster reform coalition has chosen Ken Hall, head of the union's parcel division, to challenge James P. Hoffa in elections this summer for the presidency of the 1.4-million-member union.

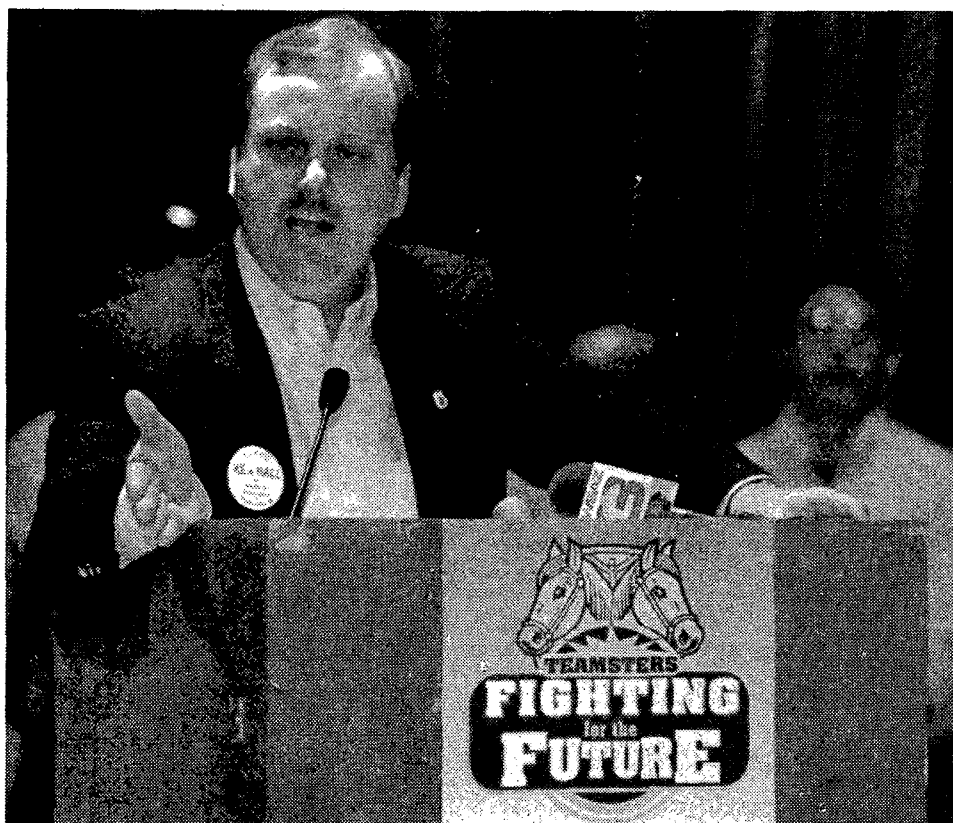
Hall, who led the Teamsters negotiations with UPS, threw his cap into the ring on April 5 at a rally in his hometown of Charleston,

W.Va. Surrounded by cheering supporters from the local union he heads, Hall pointed to the 300 contracts he's negotiated and promised his campaign would be a grass-roots effort that shunned the now-hated professional consultants. "My father was a Teamster," he said, "but I don't have to run on his record. I've got my own."

Although Hall did most of the hands-on bargaining with UPS last year, he is not well-known outside of the Teamsters. At the union's press conferences during the strike, he was the guy with the mustache standing next to Carey.

Hall faces an uphill battle in the election because of his opponent's name recognition and long months of campaigning. Hoffa, a labor lawyer who is the son of the murdered former Teamster president, first entered union politics when he ran against Carey for the union's top job in 1996. He came within four percentage points of defeating Carey in that race. But in August 1997, a federal election monitor ordered a rerun of the contest because of financial wrongdoing in Carey's campaign. Hoffa has been out on the hustings ever since.

Ken Hall, an ally of deposed Teamster president Ron Carey, will lead the reform slate in this summer's election. Hall has strong anti-corruption credentials and negotiated the Teamsters' victory over UPS last summer.



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Carey was disqualified from competing in the rerun election in November, based on allegations that he was personally involved in his campaign consultants illegal financial maneuvering (see "What Went Wrong," December 14, 1997). The reform camp remained without a candidate for months, as Carey appealed his removal. When it became clear that he was not coming back, he gave the nod to Hall.

It is possible that Hoffa will be disqualified as well; the election monitor is now investigating his 1996 campaign. If he is removed from the ballot, the union's "old guard" will have to scramble for a replacement candidate, and Hall's chances will improve considerably.

At 41 years old, Hall has been a Teamster for 22 years. He began as a roustabout in West Virginia's oil fields, moving up to steward and business agent before becoming president of the 3,500-member Charleston local in 1990. Supporters stress his experience negotiating contracts for a wide range of Teamster divisions—from freight and warehouse to dairy, bakery and brewery. Although Hall did not back Carey in the union's 1991 election, Carey tapped Hall for an important anti-corruption task—abolishing the "area conferences" in 1993. Hall was one of those in charge of removing this wasteful but entrenched layer of bureaucrats from their offices.

In 1995, Carey picked him to head the 220,000-member parcel division that includes UPS. Contracts at UPS, the union's largest employer, set the pace for other big divisions such as freight. When Carey decided on a showdown with the company over part-time work, it was Hall who oversaw the details of an aggressive contract campaign and did the behind-the-scenes bargaining. The international surveyed members on their priorities, hired 18 rank-and-file members as campaign coordinators, and prodded locals to hold events like "whistle blowing days" and parking-lot rallies. These activities went on for months before the strike deadline.

Not all locals got on board, of course: Many are still under the control of officers who identify with the old guard, and even some Carey supporters are unenthusiastic about or inexperienced at mobilizing the members. This is where Hall's methods diverged from that of most union officials of his rank: He sent campaign materials not just to local union officers, as protocol would dictate, but also to painstakingly gathered lists of rank and filers, who organized around, or in spite of, their local officials.

Hall's record at UPS also demonstrates an important difference between him and the vast majority of union officials. When UPS launched a labor-management cooperation, "team concept" scheme in 1995, Hall led an aggressive campaign against it. "Once Carey said this was big time stuff," says one staffer, "Ken took the ball and ran with it. He shepherded the campaign."

In that campaign, the parcel division organized regional workshops for local union representatives to educate them on

the dangers of team concept, and asked members not to cooperate with the company's team meetings. Every UPS steward in the country was sent a 15-minute video—which proclaimed, "We have a team—it's the Teamsters." And the union sent a newsletter to all UPS Teamster members suggesting tactics for fighting management's program.

Rank and filers and some local officers ran with the campaign. In some locals, they refused to participate; in others the best shop floor activists volunteered as "team leaders" and turned the team meetings into discussions of job safety. The international union filed unfair labor practice charges against the company. Hall's campaign won—eventually, UPS canceled the program.

This warm-up struggle gave the Teamsters an advantage as they entered contract negotiations in 1997. In most unions, participation in cooperation programs is official union policy. Most top union officials have embraced

such schemes; indeed, labor-management "partnership" (once workers are unionized) is the official line of John Sweeney's AFL-CIO. Members constantly hear from both union leaders and management that "our interests are the same." But when it comes time to fight over something, members are often unprepared. At UPS, even the average rank and filer knew the union meant business.

Before the election scandal broke, Carey was the glue that held the disparate forces of the reform coalition together. Without Carey, it took precious months for the different factions to agree on a candidate. On one side was Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), the 22-year-old, independent, rank-and-file movement in the union, which has around 10,000 members. Some TDU leaders had preferred Tom Leedham, a vice-president on Carey's slate and a local president in Portland, Ore. As head of the union's warehouse division, Leedham had taken member involvement and education seriously.

On the other side were key regional leaders, such as Pennsylvania Conference President John Morris, who oppose the do-nothing style of the old guard but also have little in common with the democratic model that TDU promotes. Morris, along with George Cashman of Boston and Carroll Haynes of New York, are important vice-presidents on the reform slate because the eastern region contains a third of the Teamster membership. In 1996, the Carey slate won this region handily.

Cashman, in fact, wanted the top job himself. He put himself forward as a unity candidate and made offers to Hoffa supporters to join his slate. TDU, however, effectively put the kibosh on a Cashman bid; the group's November convention resolved, "We do not support the creation of a so-called reconciliation slate with the old guard forces."

In the end, it seemed that Hall was the candidate all could

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agree on, and, because of his role at UPS, he was the easiest to campaign for. In addition, UPSers tend to vote in higher percentages than the union's other constituencies. Hall's backers are betting that he can strike a spark throughout the union. "Hall is somebody who showed in the UPS strike that he knows what workers want in this country," says Gillian Furst, a Carey appointee to the union's ethical practices committee and a rank-and-file member in a Minneapolis factory. "He did something that the labor movement is in desperate need of, and that's a victory."

Hall has also spoken at the last three TDU conventions. That group will put its considerable grass-roots muscle into his campaign. "We'll be throwing everything into keeping the old guard from taking back our union," TDU national organizer Ken Paff says. "Our biggest opponent may not be Junior Hoffa, but cynicism in some of our membership. This campaign has to give them hope for the future of the Teamsters."

On one level, the election fight will be between different versions of unionism. Many Teamsters, like members of other unions, would like to believe that a strong president can win their battles for them. Hoffa's slogan is "Restore the Power," harking back to the days when the Teamsters made employers tremble. As Paff wrote, analyzing Hoffa's 1996 election results: "Many members ... find it hard to accept that union power comes from a mobilized and involved membership. The allure of a strong leader who will slay the corporate dragon still resonates." In other words, if a big name can get results by pounding the table, why not pay your dues, sit back and let him do the work?

Hall, in contrast, told his kick-off campaign rally: "I'm not going to stand here and say, 'Vote for me—I'm such a great

man that I can solve all the problems of the world.' ... our strength comes from the members."

The Hall campaign will thus have two arguments to make: that a union is not a one-man show, and that even if one great leader could "restore the power," Hoffa is not that man. Hoffa has never held any union office and therefore has no record to defend. And his old-guard allies offered employers concessions hand-over-fist and sat by as the freight industry de-unionized. "If his last name were Smith or Jones," says Hall, "and he said he wanted to be president of this union but he never negotiated a contract, never served as a steward, and never worked as a Teamster, he'd be laughed right out of this race."

Although Hoffa's showing in 1996 would seem to give him the edge, Hall's backers point to miserable showings by Hoffa supporters in a slew of recent local races. This is evidence, they hope, that the more active members—the ones who vote—do not want to go back to the old days of cronyism and corruption.

In November, 10,000 workers at Northwest Airlines voted 3-to-1 against the pro-Hoffa incumbents and for the TDU slate. In Dallas and Columbus, Ohio, reformers became president as Hoffa's guys finished third. Members of the 17,500 member Chicago Local 705 rejected Hoffa's choice for the local presidency, and re-elected an incumbent reformer. Even in Senior Hoffa's home Local 299 in Detroit, where Junior Hoffa campaigned personally for his buddies, members voted for the Carey loyalists.

In order to win, says Furst, who is a TDU leader, Hall will need to "talk to and shake hands with as many rank-and-file Teamsters as he can." "We don't want to go back," he says. "We've won so much." ■

Jane Slaughter is a labor journalist in Detroit.

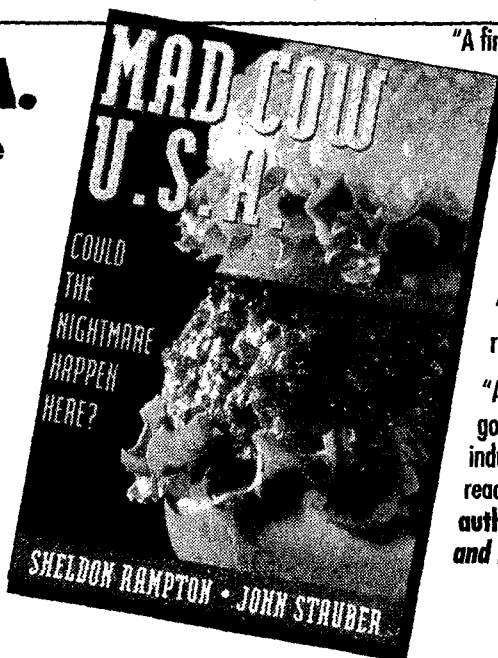
MAD COW U.S.A. Could the Nightmare Happen Here?

by John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton

published by Common Courage Press
hardcover, 246 pages

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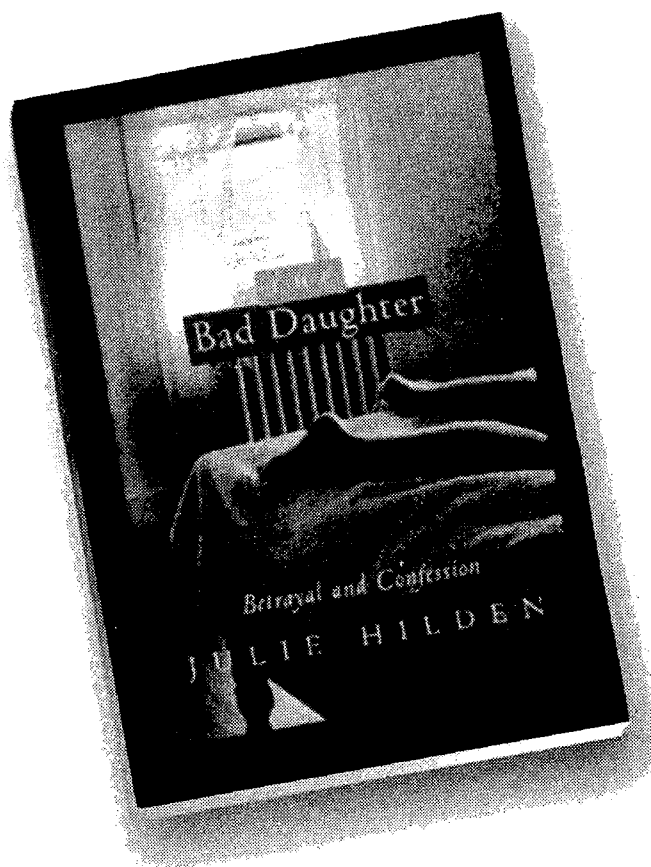
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Who's Bad?

The Bad Daughter: Betrayal and Confession

By Julie Hilden
Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill
198 pages, \$18.95

REVIEWED BY KEVIN O'KELLY



Of late, the American memoir seems more a vehicle for social criticism than personal confession. Some recent examples read like muck-raking exposés. Their subjects are the big, dirty secrets of our society's supposed moral foundations—the good family and the white middle class. In 1997's *The Kiss*, Kathryn Harrison recounts her three-year affair with her clergyman father. And Susanna Kaysen's *Girl, Interrupted* reveals how a hasty decision by an eminent psychiatrist confined a teenage girl to a mental institution for two years.

Julie Hilden's *The Bad Daughter*, a devastating look at family and personal life gone awry, has great exposé potential as well. But she stays too close to the genre of confession to pull it off. She frames her book not as an exposé but as a narrative of sin and punishment. Her sin is refusing to drop out of law school to take care of her mother, who suffers from Alzheimer's disease. Hilden made a perfectly explicable and defensible decision: She was an emotionally abused child who graduated from high school one year early to get

away from her mother. But she cannot forgive herself for what she considers "abandonment." And she imagines the punishment: the good chance that she too has the hereditary gene mutation that caused her mother's illness.

Of course, Hilden's tale is less about an unconscionable wrong than about the author's quite human limitations. Hilden castigates herself for not being omniscient, for not being able to look beyond her mother's abuse and for not knowing how to help her. When she finds out that the early symptoms of Alzheimer's include feelings of intense anger toward family members, Hilden indicts herself: "All my excuses for leaving her were being taken from me." Can she seriously think that leaving home as a teen-ager was any less necessary? Would it have been any easier to stay and tolerate her mother's abuse simply because it had a biological cause?

This obsession with sin is a shame, too, because Hilden writes passionately and powerfully about child abuse and misogyny, and about her painstaking, if sometimes misguided, attempts to fill in the outlines of a life. Those attempts

provide the real story of this book. Almost everything crucial to the formation of a healthy emotional life—and to the formation of a functional self—was missing from Hilden's early years.

Hilden's parents divorced when she was about 12. Her mother took her from Hawaii—the only home she had ever known—to New Jersey, where Hilden assumed a new life with the Learys, relatives from her mother's side of the family whom she had met only twice before. The experience was a nightmare. Her mother abused alcohol and became deeply paranoid, screaming at Hilden almost daily and constantly accusing her of stealing. Through high school, Hilden took refuge in schoolwork and books while avoiding making close friends. "If I did," she writes, "then someday they would want to come to the house."

Hilden escapes that home by going to Harvard University and then to Yale Law School. Unfortunately, the friends she makes as an adult are as much empty casts of people as her mother's family. Paul, a lawyer with whom she

has an affair, is a parody of masculinity. He considers his job as a prosecutor to be of a piece with "sex and sports: the girl conquered, the ball swishing through the hoop." Aaron, her boyfriend at the time, is equally grotesque. He carries the *Zagat* restaurant guide in his jacket pocket at all times, plans to live in the Trump Tower once he passes the bar exam and reminds Hilden that he is entitled to a more attractive-looking woman. Soon after they break up, he nearly rapes her. "I think he did not rape me precisely because of how expensive his suits were, how much money he knew he'd make," she writes.

Throughout this story, Hilden is haunted by a failure to meet some sort of ideal of femininity. This sense of inadequacy was drilled into her from an early age. As a child, her mother told her about an aunt who discovered her husband's cache of pornography but successfully "won him back by spending days on the treadmill until she'd lost weight." Her mother's boyfriend takes a look at Hilden's rear end before deciding whether she could have a piece of cheesecake.

As an adult, her closest friend, Sarah, makes her feel unattractive by comparison. Hilden recalls that Sarah was "messily beautiful. ... [I felt] plain beside her." Hilden relentlessly records her boyfriend Aaron's comparisons of her body with Sarah's: "Your breasts sag, you have a fat stomach. ... [Sarah] has a fantastic body... not like yours." Aaron ends up sleeping with Sarah in retaliation for Hilden's affair with Paul, while Hilden sleeps with Paul at least partly from relief that he finds her attractive. "I felt so grateful that he loved my body, that he accepted the softness of my breasts and my belly's convexity," she explains. This emphasis on physical appearance simply underscores the superficiality of their lives.

In none of her romantic relationships does Hilden tell anyone the story of her childhood or the full extent of her mother's illness. "In not letting him know me, I had failed to know him as well," she writes of her relationship with Aaron. "Without that, all we had together was a series of nice dinners, conversations about classes and law firms."

Even her friendship with Sarah was about as much about competition as it was about trust.

Predictably, these relationships disintegrate, forcing Hilden to make a concerted effort to build a new, more honest life. She dates men she actually confides in. She begins to admit to herself how much her mother hurt her. And when she considers the possibility that she too might die of Alzheimer's, she begins to forgive herself for not being thinner or more beautiful. She actually begins to value being alive.

Unfortunately, Hilden searches too hard for simple patterns of behavior in the people she writes about and provides facile interpretations of their motives. This is her most serious weakness as a writer. Even the quotation about Paul's adolescent machismo lacks the faintest hint of irony. And when Hilden tries to describe her mother's neurological deterioration, the book degenerates into melodrama. On some level, she must realize the real story lies elsewhere. The drama of *The Bad Daughter* is not of sin and punishment—or even of horrific illness—but

of recovery from a life steeped in misogyny and mistrust.

Hilden mistakenly believes she could have really left her mother behind once she walked out the door of her house, and that relationships without trust are relationships worth having. She puts so much faith in clean breaks, unmixed motives and clearly defined boundaries that she refuses to recognize how messy and complicated real life can become.

In many ways, Hilden never gets it. She never grasps that so much of the pressure, guilt and abuse flung upon her was a result of her sex. She never stops to wonder if a man would ever be expected to be physically perfect or to drop his career to care for a hopelessly ill relative. Hilden is a "bad daughter" only by the definition accepted by the Learys—a family (like so many in this country) where women are responsible for everything, from maintaining marriages to caring for the dying. She never quite realizes the irony of her title: Had Hilden been born a boy, she would never have been called a "bad son." ■

Kevin O'Kelly is a freelance writer in Carborro, N.C.

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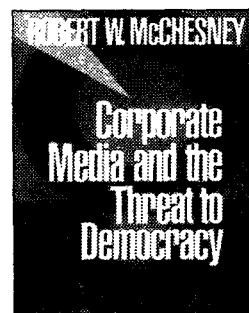
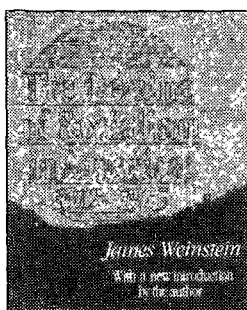
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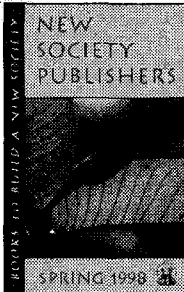
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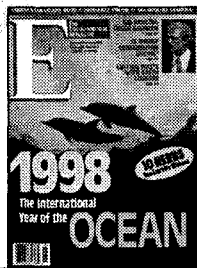
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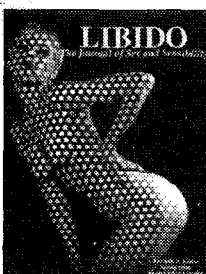


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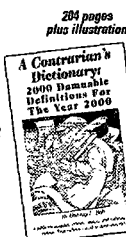
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Continued from page 30

Council for Peace Politics. The Council brought a raft of members of left-wing and peace groups into local Democratic clubs and turned them against the war. Bella disdained the pro-war liberals aligned with Lyndon Johnson and Hubert Humphrey, and she fought them tooth-and-nail, club by club.

This was real bottom-up work: At the time, each assembly district had competing reform and regular clubs vying to elect party district leaders. The strategy was simple: Get reform clubs to pass anti-war resolutions, use those majorities to elect district leaders, and then support congressional candidates committed to running on an anti-war platform. On voting nights, Bella stalked club-house corridors, counting noses and making sure her telephone trees had brought out every last vote. This was not confined to Manhattan—many of the anti-war political action committees she created in Brooklyn and Queens became the nuclei for launching reform Democratic clubs, which in turn spawned successful insurgent candidacies against the hacks of the puissant regular machines.

By 1967, Bella's work had helped turn the reform clubs against the war, laying the foundation for the emerging "dump-Johnson" movement, in which she played a pivotal role. When that movement spawned the competing anti-war candidacies of Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy, Bella worked tirelessly to preserve unity in the anti-war forces, negotiating coalition slates to run as delegates to the 1968 Democratic Convention. The slates were dominated by issue-oriented Democrats, including both Kennedy and McCarthy supporters. Most of them won.

In 1969, anti-war New York Mayor John V. Lindsay, denied re-nomination by the Republicans, faced probable defeat by a conservative, race-baiting, pro-war Democrat. With her friend from the dump-Johnson movement, former RFK aide (and current City Councilwoman) Ronnie Eldridge, Bella organized an independent ballot line as a vehicle for anti-war, pro-civil rights, reform Democrats to vote for Lindsay. Labor, tenants and other community groups were brought into this citizens' coalition, but the by-now-considerable peace movement was its core. Bella helped Lindsay craft an urban political strategy that showed how the poor and working classes paid for the war through declining services. This brought many new voters into the Lindsay camp. He won narrowly.

Still, the war raged on, and many of us urged Bella to run for Congress against Leonard Farbstein, an undistinguished, entrenched machine hack who supported the war. By the time she announced in early 1970, Bella was already a nationally recognized anti-war leader and an important figure on the city's political scene. Her polyglot district included Greenwich Village (where she lived), Little Italy, Chinatown and the Lower East Side, with its Eastern European and, increasingly, Hispanic immigrants. While anti-war activists formed the heart of her campaign, she broadened her base to include union members, tenants and the working poor. Her field operation, crafted neighborhood-by-neighborhood, put a thousand people into door-to-door campaigning.


Bella was also the first major political figure to embrace gay rights, which made her a heroine to the many same-sexers in her district. And she had a flair for publicity. For example, when hard-hats were regularly beating up anti-war protesters, Bella campaigned among them at construction sites all over her district, debating the war and winning their respect (as well as important exposure on local TV). No wonder her election-night victory party at the national headquarters of the Maritime Union was Fellini-esque in its colorful diversity.

When Bella got to Congress, her first official act was to introduce a resolution calling for the immediate withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Vietnam. Before Watergate, she introduced a resolution demanding the impeachment of Richard Nixon (for his secret, illegal bombing of Cambodia). She also introduced the first federal bill to extend civil rights laws to lesbians and gays, the first bill to decriminalize marijuana and, before *Roe v. Wade*, the first bill to guarantee reproductive rights to women. By mastering the arcane rules of the House, she won the respect of her conservative colleagues. She organized a coalition to pass important clean water legislation, and she wrote and passed the Freedom of Information, the Right to Privacy and the Sunshine in Government Acts, at the same time bringing \$6 billion in aid for the poor and disabled of New York. One reason for her success: She used her Congressional seat as an organizing tool. When she wanted to press for legislation inside the Capitol, she made sure that there was a demonstration outside, and she activated the various national networks to which she was linked to pressure wavering members from their districts. After three terms, her colleagues voted her Congress' third most influential member. Speaker Tip O'Neill made her an assistant majority whip.

Meanwhile in 1971, Bella helped found the National Women's Political Caucus, serving as its first co-chair and becoming godmother to a whole generation of women candidates. When Bella ran for U.S. Senate in 1976, one of her slogans was "A Stag Senate is a Stagnation." She wanted to be senator to have a bigger platform on which to organize, and she always saw the women's movement as a force in the larger cause of social and economic justice. That's why establishment liberals never really cottoned to Bella. The key factor in the heartbreakingly close 1976 senate primary, which Bella lost by eight-tenths of a percent, was the *New York Times'* endorsement of her opponent, Daniel Patrick Moynihan. (The *Times* also cost her a chance to return to Congress in 1978, this time from New York's silk-stocking district, when it endorsed her Republican opponent, William Green. Again she lost by just one percent of the vote.)

In her later years, Bella was better known outside of the United States for her international work on women's issues. But future generations should remember Bella the radical organizer, and her signature coda, which sums up her life: "Never Give Up, Never Give In." ■

Doug Ireland, a contributing editor of *In These Times*, managed Bella Abzug's 1970 campaign for Congress and her 1976 Senate race.



Live and let live

**Bella Abzug:
1920-1998**

By Doug Ireland

When Bella Abzug died on March 31 at the age of 78, most of the obituaries overlooked what were, to those of us who knew her or worked with her, the central points about her life. A committed socialist, Bella successfully took her unabashed radicalism into the mainstream of electoral politics without selling out. She was also one of the greatest organizers of this American century.

Bella got her politics from her father, a Russian immigrant who named his butcher shop in New York City's Hell's Kitchen district the Live and Let Live Meat Market as a protest against World War I. At the age of 11, a Hebrew school teacher recruited Bella into the left-wing Zionist group Hashomer Hatzair (the Young Guard). Before she reached her teens, she was a community star, giving impassioned speeches on behalf of socialist Zionism at subway stops, raising money for a Jewish homeland and campaigning to save European Jewry from Hitler.

She became a labor lawyer, representing the United Auto Workers, the Hotel and Restaurant Workers and the Furriers. (That is when she began wearing her famous hats—so that

when she walked into a labor negotiation, the bosses wouldn't mistake her for a secretary.) She did legal work for tenants on behalf of the American Labor Party (siding with Rep. Vito Marcantonio in his internecine war with the Communists for control of the ALP). As one of the few white civil rights attorneys during the '40s and '50s, she organized the first challenges to *de facto* segregation in suburban Westchester County (where she had moved with her husband and two daughters) and, in 1952, became nationally famous when she went to Mississippi, pregnant, to defend Willis McGee, a black man falsely accused of rape after having a long-term consensual relationship with a white woman.

In 1961, Bella, an early opponent of the Vietnam War, co-founded Women Strike for Peace (WSP), the first large, post-McCarthy peace group. Bella, a serious long-term strategist, realized that ending the slaughter in Southeast Asia would require fighting in the electoral arena. In 1964, having moved back to New York City, she helped organize the Metropolitan

Continued on page 29